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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	UTED-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	CIO-00	SP-00	TRSE-00	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04
	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00	/019W			

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R 301256Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9536
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
USIA WASHDC 1395

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000254

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, VE

SUBJECT: RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION POLLING INFORMATION

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SUMMARY

1. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE RESULTS OF TWO VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN POLLS, ONE NATIONAL AND THE OTHER FOR METROPOLITAN CARACAS. THE MOST RECENT NATIONAL POLL WAS PUBLISHED IN THE CARACAS DAILY "EL NACIONAL" ON DECEMBER 17. THE METROPOLITAN CARACAS POLL, CONDUCTED BY CONSULTORES 21, WAS RELEASED ON JANUARY 21, BUT IS BASED ON DATA COLLECTED THROUGH OCTOBER. BOTH OF THESE POLLS DEMONSTRATE THAT FORMER MISS UNIVERSE AND CURRENT CHACAO MAYORESS IRENE SAEZ IS THE FRONT RUNNER. END SUMMARY.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 15 JUL 2009 200503654

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THE "EL NACIONAL" POLL

2. CANDIDATE	PERCENT OF TOTAL ELECTORATE	PERCENT OF THOSE WHO WILL VOTE
IRENE SAEZ CONDE	18.3	40.0
CLAUDIO FERMIN	8.3	18.1
HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER	7.8	17.0
HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS	6.8	14.8
ANTONIO LEDEZMA	1.4	3.1
EDUARDO FERNANDEZ	1.1	2.4

3. FORMER MISS UNIVERSE AND CURRENT MAYOR OF CHACAO IRENE SAEZ IS THE CLEAR FRONT-RUNNER, ESPECIALLY AMONG POTENTIAL VOTERS. A PACK OF THREE CANDIDATES IS FIGHTING FOR SECOND PLACE: CLAUDIO FERMIN, THE FORMER DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) MEMBER WHO LEFT THE

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 PARTY IN NOVEMBER; HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF CARABOBO STATE; AND HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS, THE LEADER OF THE FEBRUARY 4, 1992 COUP ATTEMPT. CARACAS MAYOR ANTONIO LEDEZMA AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICIAN EDUARDO FERNANDEZ ARE THE ONLY TWO OTHER CANDIDATES TO RECEIVE MORE THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE POLL. OTHER CANDIDATES MENTIONED, ALL WHO POLLED LESS THAN ONE PERCENT, INCLUDE: HUMBERTO CALDERON BERTI, LUIS ALFARO UCERO, GONZALO PEREZ HERNANDEZ, HUMBERTO CELLI, LEWIS PEREZ, TEODORO PETKOFF, HECTOR ALONSO LOPEZ, AND PABLO MEDINA.

4. ONE STRIKING ASPECT OF THE POLL IS THAT 53.4 PERCENT OF THOSE SURVEYED EITHER CHOSE "NOBODY (NINGUNO)" AS THEIR PREFERENCE (35.7 PERCENT) OR WOULD NOT IDENTIFY A PREFERENCE (18.7 PERCENT). THESE POLL FIGURES COVER THE PERIOD BETWEEN NOVEMBER 24 AND 30, AND ARE BASED UPON POLLING IN CARACAS, BARQUISIMETO, MARACAIBO, VALENCIA, BARCELONA-PUERTO LA CRUZ.

CONSULTORES 21 REPORT

5. THIS POLL SURVEYED VOTERS IN METROPOLITAN CARACAS. THE RESULTS WERE:

CANDIDATES:	CARACAS SUPPORTERS (PERCENT)
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IRENE SAEZ	35
HUGO CHAVEZ	15
CLAUDIO FERMIN	12
HENRIQUE SALAS	10
ANTONIO LEDEZMA	6

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EDUARDO FERNANDEZ	3
ANDRES VELAZQUEZ	2
CARLOS TABLANTE	1

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6. OTHER INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THIS REPORT ARE:

-- FORTY PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE IS UNHAPPY AND DISSATISFIED WITH THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA. A TOTAL OF 57 PERCENT OF THE "MARGINAL" CLASS AND 53 PERCENT OF THE LOWER CLASS ARE DISSATISFIED.

-- THE REPORT STATES THAT 42 PERCENT BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL BE AN INDEPENDENT. EVEN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF "MILITANT" PARTY SUPPORTERS BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL BE AN INDEPENDENT. GREATER PORTIONS OF THE PUBLIC DO NOT IDENTIFY WITH ANY PARTICULAR PARTY.

-- IRENE SAEZ, OR SIMPLY IRENE AS SHE IS KNOWN, IS THE RUN-AWAY FRONT-RUNNER. WHILE 35 PERCENT INDICATED THAT THEY WILL VOTE FOR HER, 52 PERCENT SAID THEY FAVORED HER. SHE IS THE ONLY CANDIDATE

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	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00	/019W			

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R 301256Z JAN 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9537
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
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CIA WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 000254

E.O. 12958: N/A
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WHOSE POSITIVES OUTWEIGH HER NEGATIVES. IRENE POLLS STRONGEST
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WITH YOUNG VOTERS, THE MIDDLE CLASS, AND WOMEN. SHE IS THE
BENEFICIARY, AND INDEED CAUSE, OF THE FRACTURES WITHIN THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (COPEI) PARTY. IRENE HAS THE SECOND HIGHEST
"GROWTH POTENTIAL," AND, ACCORDING TO THE REPORT COULD GAIN AN
ADDITIONAL 17 POINTS.

-- CLAUDIO FERMIN'S DEPARTURE FROM AD HAS HURT HIM, AT LEAST IN
THE SHORT-RUN, AND HE POLLS ONLY 12 PERCENT. ACCORDING TO THE
REPORT, BECAUSE FERMIN SPLITS AD, CHAVEZ IS THE SECOND PLACE
RUNNER. FERMIN ALSO HAS A 17 POINT GROWTH POTENTIAL, BUT THIS
GROWTH, IF ACHIEVED, WOULD ONLY TAKE FERMIN TO 29 PERCENT.

-- FORMER COUP LEADER HUGO CHAVEZ POLLS SECOND WITH 15 PERCENT,
AND HAS THE CLEAR SUPPORT OF THE MARGINAL CLASS. HE IS MOST
POPULAR WITH MEN. CHAVEZ' NEGATIVES ARE VERY HIGH THOUGH, AND 62
PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE INDICATES THEY WOULD NOT VOTE FOR HIM.
CHAVEZ HAS ONLY A 15 PERCENT GROWTH POTENTIAL.

-- THREE OUT OF EVERY FOUR CARAQUEÑOS DO NOT SUPPORT "AGENDA
VENEZUELA," PRESIDENT CALDERA'S ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM. CHAVEZ
SUPPORTERS ARE MOST STRONGLY AGAINST THE AGENDA. ONLY FORMER
CARABOBO STATE GOVERNOR SALAS' SUPPORTERS STRONGLY SUPPORT THE
AGENDA. SALAS' SUPPORT ORIGINATES ALMOST SOLELY FROM THE UPPER
CLASS.

-- CAUDILLISMO IS DEAD. ONLY 22 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE

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BELIEVES THAT A "CAUDILLO" IS A LEADER, AND A MERE 5 PERCENT BELIEVE THE WORD "CAUDILLO" HAS A POSITIVE CONNOTATION.

-- THIS ELECTION WILL NOT OFFER AN OCCASION TO DEBATE A NATIONAL PROJECT OR PUBLIC POLICY. THE REPORT PREDICTS THAT ALL
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CANDIDATES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CHAVEZ, WILL AVOID A DEBATE WHICH THEY BELIEVE WILL POLARIZE THE ELECTORATE TO THE SOLE BENEFIT OF CHAVEZ. EQUAL NUMBERS OF IRENE SUPPORTERS (23 PERCENT) ARE PRO AND ANTI AGENDA.

COMMENT

7. THESE POLLS OFFER A "SNAPSHOT" OF THE CURRENT POPULARITY OF IDENTIFIABLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. THE FLAW IN THIS POLLING PROCESS IS THAT NEITHER OF THE MAJOR PARTIES -- DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) AND SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (COPEI) -- HAVE NAMED CANDIDATES. ONCE THESE PARTIES COMPLETE THEIR NOMINATION PROCESS THEIR CANDIDATES WILL OCCUPY SIGNIFICANT PLACES IN THE POLLS. IN THE MEANTIME, THE POLLS OFFER A USEFUL DEVICE TO TRACK THE POPULARITY OF "INDEPENDENT" CANDIDATES AND TO MEASURE PUBLIC INTEREST AND WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 1998 ELECTIONS.

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